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## Understanding your Emotional Health and Wellbeing following the Birth of your Baby (Mothers)

**Mood changes, irritability and episodes of tearfulness are common after giving birth. These symptoms are often known as the “baby blues”, which affects 50% of new mothers and usually lasts around 5 to 10 days.**

If your symptoms of low mood continue beyond this, it is possible that you are suffering from postnatal depression. You may also feel very anxious after your baby is born.

- Postnatal depression affects around one in ten women after having a baby and can affect mothers from all cultural backgrounds.
- If you are suffering from postnatal depression, you may feel a constant feeling of sadness and low mood, loss of interest in the world around you and you may no longer enjoy the things that used to give you pleasure. It is also possible to experience feelings of agitation, guilt, self-blame and difficulties in relating to your baby.
- It is important to remember that every woman's experience of postnatal depression will be different and not every mother suffering from postnatal depression will experience all the symptoms.

**More information on Page 2**

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**For additional fact sheets  
see [www.ihv.org.uk](http://www.ihv.org.uk)**

The information in this fact sheet was correct on 5.11.14. © Institute of Health Visiting 2014

Supported by NHS



The Start4Life Information Service for Parents provides free information and advice. Find out more at: [bit.ly/1iC4rrO](http://bit.ly/1iC4rrO)

## Understanding your Emotional Health and Wellbeing following the Birth of your Baby (Mothers)

- Postnatal depression can cause relationship difficulties between you and your partner, as well as difficulties relating to your baby's sleep patterns, feeding and development delays in the long term, if not treated.
- Postnatal depression can be lonely, distressing and frightening, but there are many treatments available. As long as it is recognised and treated, postnatal depression is a temporary condition that you can recover from.
- It is very important to seek help if you think you have postnatal depression. The condition is unlikely to get better by itself quickly and it could impact on the care of the baby.
- If you think you may have postnatal depression then contact your health visitor or GP. They will be able to carry out a full assessment by asking you a number of questions and may ask you to complete a questionnaire, such as the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS). This will enable them to offer you the best support.
- Help is available in a range of different forms including self-help advice, talking therapies, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), and antidepressant medication.
- There are also a number of things that you can do to improve your emotional wellbeing following birth and reduce the risks of postnatal depression, such as:
  - Get as much rest and relaxation as possible.
  - Take regular gentle exercise.
  - Don't go for long periods without food because low blood sugar levels can make you feel much worse.
  - Don't drink alcohol because it can make you feel worse.
  - Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
  - Don't try to do everything at once. Make a list of things to do and set realistic goals.
  - Talk about your worries with your partner, close family and friends.
  - Contact local support groups or national helplines for advice and support.
  - Don't try to be "Supermum". Avoid extra challenges either during pregnancy or in the first year after your baby is born. A new baby is enough of a challenge for most people.
- **Remember: don't despair. You're not to blame. Postnatal depression can affect anyone and it can be treated with the right support and help. The earlier you seek help, the better.**

### More information:

Boots Family Trust Wellbeing Plan:

[bit.ly/1yY2tfj](http://bit.ly/1yY2tfj)

NHS Choices:

[bit.ly/1yCYxBA](http://bit.ly/1yCYxBA)

Mind:

[bit.ly/1wMEMrP](http://bit.ly/1wMEMrP)

Mind telephone:

0300 123 3393

Netmums Postnatal depression Support group:

[bit.ly/1s8AAvZ](http://bit.ly/1s8AAvZ)